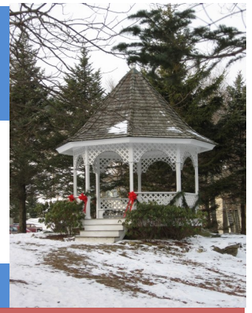
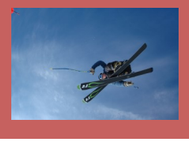
BEECH MOUNTAIN EAR

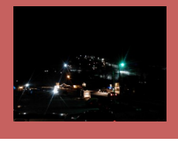
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF BEECH MOUNTAIN

Winter

2015







WELCOME BACK, JES

James E. "Jes" Scott recently resigned as Beech Mountain's Planning Director to take a position with a private consulting firm in Boone. After briefly testing the waters of private consulting, he decided he preferred his old job, and he will once again be Planning Director of the town.

One of Scott's significant achievements has been the development of a Comprehensive Plan for Beech Mountain. His return means he'll continue to see to the implementation and evolution of the plan, as well as the commercial building standards recently adopted by the Town Council.

BUCKEYE IS BUZZING

It has been a busy holiday season for Parks and Recreation. Both the Sledding Hill and the Buckeye Recreation Center experienced record numbers of participants in their winter events. The festivities kicked off with the annual Holiday Market on Saturday, November 29. The Market offered displays of local and regional arts and crafts for sale as well as food, family fun and a range of children's activities. Santa Claus arrived in time to pose for photographs with the children.

A couple of weeks later Santa reappeared on the mountain to greet children at 4 Seasons on Beech. Then Mrs. Claus hosted breakfast for children and their parents at Buckeye on December 20. Two days after Christmas more than 250 children and parents enjoyed the Yule Log Bonfire and Marshmallow Roast. A hayride through Woodland Meadows gave a wonderful ending to the event.

Buckeye closed out the year on December 31 with its annual New Year's Eve Family FunFest. More than 350 children and adults came for the dance music, the Bounce House, hula hoops and other activities, as well as what Parks and Recreation folks called a "kid-friendly buffet." The fun didn't end with the holiday season. An addition to the daily fun and fitness activities available at Buckeye is the installation of new Pickleball courts. Thanks to the Beech Mountain Club for help with the installation.

The Buckeye Recreation Center has more special events scheduled through the rest of the snow season and into spring. For up-to-date information you can check out the monthly Buckeye Buzz newsletter or visit the new and improved Parks and Recreation web site at www.beechrecreation.org.

In addition to the latest information on Buckeye facilities and events, the new web site includes a parks and playground grid, a hiking and biking grid, and Emerald Outback Trail grid and video and links to other town web sites. There's also a contact page where you can send comments.

TOWN HALL MEETING SCHEDULES

- The Beech Mountain Town Council meets at 4 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month: March 10, April 14 and May 12.
- The Planning Board meets at 9 a.m. the last Tuesday of each month: February 24, March 31, and April 28.
- The Tourism Development Authority meets at 9:30 a.m. the last Wednesday of each month: February 25, March 25, April 29.
- The Recreation Committee meets at 8:30 a.m. the first Thursday of each month: March 5, April 2 and May 7.
- The Board of Adjustment meets as needed at 6 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month: March 3, April 7 and 5.
- The Tree Committee meets as needed at 10 a.m. on the first Monday of each month: March 2, April 6 and May 4.

BEECH MOUNTAIN TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor Rick Owen
Vice Mayor Paul Piquet
Alan Holcombe
Cindy Keller
Rick Miller

STAFF

- Town Manager Randy Feierabend (828) 387-4236 ext. 226
- Finance Officer Nancy Johnson (828) 387-4236 ext. 225
- Town Clerk Jennifer Broderick (828) 387-4236 ext. 224
- Tax Collector Rebecca Ward (828) 387-4236 ext. 223
- Utility Billing Clerk Mary Riley (828)387-4236 ext. 221
- Building Inspector John Merritt (828)387-4236 ext. 227
- Public Works Director Riley Hatch (828) 387-9282
- Police Chief Shawn Freeman (828) 387-2342 ext. 233
- Parks and Recreation Director Sandy Carr (828) 387-3003
- Planning Director James "Jes" Scott (828) 387-4236 ext. 237
- Utilities Director Robert Heaton (828) 387-9282
- Fire Chief Robert "Bob" Pudney (828) 387-4612
- Tourism Development Director Kate Gavenus (828)387-9283

A BETTER FIRST IMPRESSION

The natural scenery is always spectacular, but residents and visitors driving into the Town of Beech Mountain this winter have noticed welcome improvements in the man-made part of the scene that greets them.

First is the long-standing Holland Realty billboard just a short distance before the town limits. Last fall the Tourism Development Authority, chaired by Brian Barnes, worked with Holland Realty to renovate the structure and replace the faded face of the board with a sign welcoming visitors to Beech Mountain with the Holland Realty name remaining on the board. As of this writing, the other side of the board remains blank. The TDA hopes to develop an appropriate message to put there for motorists leaving the town, whether visitors or residents.

Next on the left inside the town limits is the building generally known as the former Works of Wood. In recent years the once handsome building has been in serious disrepair and vacant except for temporary occupancy of one corner by the Beech Mountain History Museum in the summer of 2013. Over the past year, new ownership has completely renovated the structure to house retail and residential rental facilities under the name of White Wolf Lodge.

Building Inspector John Merritt worked closely with new owner Larry Watren and says the building meets all the Town's standards. Now the first structure people see as they arrive on Beech Mountain is truly an asset to the town, visibly and otherwise.

A little farther along, where the Beech Mountain Parkway curves past the Overlook, is another Tourism Development Authority project, the new Overlook Kiosk**.**

It provides an attractive and informative amenity on the site of one of the most spectacular views in the High Country. Susie Knepka, who maintains the town's plantings along the Parkway, decorated the new kiosk for the holidays and added an ornament box built by Kelsey Stines who works with Parks and Recreation. Visitors were invited to pick an ornament out of the box, write their names and addresses on it and hang it on a nearby tree. Susie says she collected 147 ornaments from the tree, put there by visitors from far and wide. Most were from the United States, but home countries written on the ornaments included Poland, Cuba, Holland, Australia, Spain and San Salvador.

A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Town Manager recently gave the Council a concise but thorough summary of the accomplishments of the various departments in 2014. Here are some of the highlights.

Utilities Department:

- Received loan approval for the Water Treatment Plant replacement project and submitted plans for the new plant for approval by the US Department of Agriculture and the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
- Rebuilt Golfview Lift Station.
- Repaired meters, pipes and manholes.
- Continued working with the Fire Department to replace hydrants.

Planning and Inspections Department:

- Administered $75,000 NC State grant for Emerald Outback trails.
- Produced a comprehensive study of the Town's "animal issues" with recommendations for actions Town government and property owners could take to reduce litter problems, property damage and unwanted encounters with wildlife. One result was improved waste containment at the Recycling Center, reducing the incidence of bear problems there.
- Developed new architectural standards for the commercial thoroughfare (Beech Mountain Parkway).
- Drafted ordinance amendments and updates affecting burning regulations, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers and road connections.
- Conducted 372 building, electrical, plumbing and mechanical inspections and issued 152 building permits which added more than $5 million in property values.
- Monitored major renovations at the Pinnacle Inn and the former Works of Wood building and provided design and construction oversight for Parkway Overlook improvements.

Volunteer Fire Department:

- Cooperated in the creation of the Town of Beech Mountain Fire Department designed to maintain the Department as a strong volunteer organization while assuring local control and long-term financial stability.
- Between October 31, 2013 and August 31, 2014, answered 64 fire calls and 97 medical emergency calls with an average response time of 8.8 minutes.
- Department's Wilderness Rescue Team continued training for emergency medical situations and search and rescue missions.
- Implemented use of the new Lucas2 Cardiac Compression Device. The first use involved a person in complete cardiac arrest, who was transferred to the hospital with heartbeat and breathing restored.
- Tested and inspected 342 fire hydrants, leading to repair or replacement of 12 hydrants by the Utilities Department.

Police Department:

- Added three new computers in dispatch, improving speed and reliability;
- Replaced the computer that controls recording software; and
- Replaced the malfunctioning copier in dispatch, all by using 911 funds with no local tax dollars required.
- Installed a new air conditioning unit in the computer room.
- Implemented the Care Trak System (http://www.caretrak.com/)for locating persons with dementia or Alzheimer's. Care Trak created telemetry based tracking for people at risk in 1986.
- Currently running more than 300 business checks and more than 300 residence checks ahead of previous year's totals.

Parks and Recreation Department:

- Upgraded and repaired facilities at Buckeye Recreation Center, including the gym ceiling, fire alarm and sprinklers, parking lot bumpers and lobby furniture.
- Installed system giving members 24/7 access to Fitness Room.
- Inspected and renovated the playgrounds and Bark Park.
- Provided new signage, guardrail and traffic flow directions at Sledding Hill.
- Improved hiking trails, trail maps and standardized kiosks.
- Expanded marketing and promotion efforts, including Buckeye Buzz, a restaurant and lodging map, and a new web site.
- Began new exercise classes and expanded year-round schedule of family-oriented events and youth programs.

Department of Public Works:

- Worked with Parks and Recreation to rebuild the walkway bridge on Pond Creek Trail, to repair old road grade and clear right of way on Red Fox Lane and to install a new guard rail at the Sledding Hill.
- Assisted in setting up and taking down Sledding Hill.
- Paved intersections of Parkway -Village Road and Pine Ridge-Grassy Gap Loop; the parking area at Lake Coffey and Lakeledge Road; Old Field Road and Hill Top Road.
- Striped the Town Hall parking lot and Lake Coffey parking area.
- Constructed and made improvements to rock flower beds and planters.
- Improved drainage at Town Hall parking lot.
- Paved and installed the structure and constructed the kiosk at the Parkway Overlook.

Tourism Development Authority:

- Created and installed new signage and enhanced trail markings in Emerald Outback.
- Designed the 8-panel kiosk and landscaping at the Parkway Overlook.
- Improved Beech TV.
- Renovated Holland Realty billboard.
- Advertised the Town of Beech Mountain through WCNC-TV in Charlotte.
- Placed photo spots of the Town on Facebook.

Administration:

- Audited municipal finances and found them "excellent" for the fifth consecutive year.
- Achieved 2013 property tax collection rate of 99 percent, with occupancy tax collections also ahead of previous year.

A HAPPY HILL

Another nice bit of scenery near the entrance to the town is the almost-always beautifully groomed free sledding hill, which is almost-always swarming with happy kids. To get there, many of those kids cross from the parking area across the street, carrying their sleds, so please take your time and be alert when driving through the area. And remember that the sledding hill is for children age 12 and younger.

Parks and Recreation estimates that 6500 people have used the sledding hill from its opening last fall through January of this year.

The sledding hill is open, weather permitting, from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

CHIEF SHAWN FREEMAN

Beech Mountain's new Chief of Police comes to the office with a background in the North Carolina's foothills and mountains and the particularly relevant experience of serving as assistant chief in the resort community of Bald Head Island. He is a native of nearby Connelly Springs.

Shawn Freeman began his law enforcement career in Morganton. He earned a degree in Organizational Leadership and Criminal Justice Administration at Mountain State University. In between he served in the U.S. Air Force during Operation Desert Shield. He replaces Jerry Turbyfill, who resigned last fall to take a position with the Avery County Sheriff's Department.

Chief Freeman and his wife, Rhonda, have a daughter, Emma, who is attending Watauga High School. She has been accepted into the Nursing program at Lees-McRae College.

GAVENUS MOVES TO TOURISM POST

The multi-talented Kate Gavenus has left the job as Director at the Beech Mountain Chamber of Commerce to take over as Director of Tourism and Economic Development. She is well qualified for the position. Dottie Moretz, another capable and talented individual, is replacing Gavenus as Chamber Director.

Gavenus has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Appalachian State University, a master's in Higher Education Administration from Western Carolina University and a nonprofit management certificate from Duke University. Over the past three decades she has owned a small business, managed a nonprofit and worked in government administration and community service.